

The Unreasonableness of Anger.

A
S E R M O N
Preach'd before the
Q U E E N,
A T
W H I T E - H A L L,
JULY xxix. 1694

By *Lancelot Blackburne*, M. A. Chaplain to the
Right Reverend Father in God *Jonathan*
Lord Bishop of *Exon*.

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Ephes. iv. 31, 32.

*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and
clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away
from you, with all malice; and be ye kind
one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving
one another, even as God for Christ's sake
hath forgiven you.*

IN this Epistle to the *Ephesians* St. Paul seems to
propose to himself these Two things: First,
The confirming their Faith, by laying open
the whole Mystery of their Salvation, and com-
paring it with the Misery of their former Hea-
then-state, in the three first Chapters; And then

the perswading 'em to express their Gratitude to Almighty God for so great a Deliverance, by the Exercise of all those Christian Vertues, which that most Holy Dispensation was design'd to introduce.

This latter part of his Design he enters on in this Chapter, and opens it with an earnest Perswasion to *Meekness, Unity, Charity, and Condescension*; enforcing it all along with great strength of Reason, from their being *Members of one Body*, from their being governed by *one* and the same *Holy Spirit*, having *one Hope* of Eternal Life, *one Lord Christ*, *one Faith* in him, *one Baptism* in his Name, *one God, one Father of all*; from the several Gifts of Christ to his Church, all tending to preserve and advance this Unity among 'em: and at last, to strike at the very Cause of those Disorders, which hinder'd its Increase, He concludes, *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice*: and strengthening that Exhortation with the Example of our merciful God, that unexhausted Fountain of infinite Goodness, he adds, *And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*.

The drift of the several Expressions in the Text, is to perswade us to Acts of Concord and Charity, and to dissuade us from all the Obstacles to it, which

which that unruly *Passion of Anger* lays in our way.

The general Head of Charity is of too large, and too nice a Nature, to be stated at length, in its several Particulars, within the compass of a Discourse; and therefore, after opening further in a word or two the difficulty of that Task, I shall chuse to fix our Inquiries more particularly on that *Vice, or Passion of Anger*, which chiefly opposes it. I shall endeavour to shew you the *folly and unreasonableness of it in its Rise, its Nature and Effects*; with regard to *private Men, and publick Communities*; and afterwards back these Reasonings with the several *Rules and Examples* to this Purpose, that are to be met with in the *Gospel*. I shall, in the Close, point the force of what has been said immediately upon Our Selves; and shew, of what present *Use and Advantage* the Argument is to us.

It is not so hard to perswade Men that Charity is a Duty, as it is to fix the Bounds and Limits of it; not many, I think, who own themselves Christians, will dispute their Obligation to mutual Forbearance and Condescension, though few, if any, can agree in its Measures and Extent. Besides those Prejudices, which an obstinate Bigotry and false Zeal, or Fear and worldly Interest may raise in our Minds, and so pervert our Judgments, in applying this Duty to particular Cases;

Cases ; there is difficulty enough in the nature of the thing. The very different Judgments, even cool and thinking Men frame, of the same Action sufficiently speak it. What by some may be judg'd but a necessary steadiness, by others is interpreted an obstinate stubbornness, a peremptory stiffness, and a streightness of bowels: and what appears to one as necessary a tenderness and forbearance, is esteem'd by others a base and treacherous compliance. The Apostles themselves found it no easie task to adjust this Matter. The stiff adherence of the Jewish Converts to the *Mosaical Ceremonies*, which they thought unchangeable, and their obstinate desire of *keeping up the partition-wall between them and the Gentiles*, which they would not understand to be broken down, rais'd no small Trouble and Dissention in the Church at *Antioch*: and when the Apostles and Elders came together at *Jerusalem*, to decide the Question, Whether the Gentile Profelytes shou'd be oblig'd to Circumcision, 'twas not till after there had been much disputing, (as we learn from *St. Luke*) that they came to the Resolution of *not laying any new burthen upon them, nor putting a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, which neither their own fathers, nor they themselves were able to bear.* And even after this Decision, (which one would have thought, had settled the Point) *St. Peter coming to Antioch did eat*
with

with the Gentiles; but when certain came from James, tender of giving scandal to Them, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the Circumcision. This, St. Paul, withstanding him boldly to the face, called dissembling, and walking not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel; whom St. Peter 'tis plain by his practice judg'd as much too stiff and inflexible to those of the Circumcision. So different have been the Judgments even of the best assisted and most enlighten'd Persons concerning the measures of this Duty, when it came once to be applied to a particular Case.

But yet how difficult soever it may be to state this nicely in its full extent, thus much, which is more to our present purpose, both from the Writings of the Apostles, and from their Practice, seems to lie plain before us: That the Unity of the Church, and the Charity we owe to our Neighbour, obliges us not to do or say any thing however innocent in it self (unless engag'd to it by Duty, or something like Necessity) which by reason of his unhappy Temper, or Prejudices, may put him out of the way to Heaven, or hinder his Advancement in it; much less, how different soever our Opinions may be, or on either hand, how well soever grounded, are we to give way to bitterness, anger, wrath, clamour, evil-speaking, or malice;

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so as either to employ 'em our selves, or be provok'd by 'em to revenge, when they are us'd against us: but rather ought we to be *kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.*

If the violence of Anger were not of it self in perfect Opposition to the Law of Christ, and that Meekness it enjoins, yet its mischievous Effects, both on our selves and others, are enough to make it justly be detested; and convince us it can never be well employed but on it self: that It alone calls for all that Bitterness and ill Language it usually breaks out in; and truly merits that most implacable Revenge it generally animates; which is never satisfy'd but in reducing its Object below the power of doing us an Injury. The Disorder it causes in our Minds, our Blood, and our Spirits, deserves indeed all the Resentment it raises; but the Passion is too irregular to be so well directed, and we are too much heated to judge so truly of its Application: we blindly mis-place it on our innocent Neighbour, and lay the weight of that on our Brother, which is only due to our own Pride or ill Nature.

For 'tis an *Anger*, which is *Wrath*, that is here forbidden, an Anger of *Revenge* or of *Reproach*; which owes its Rise either to an *over-fond opinion of our selves*, or too mean a one of other men.

Man

Man is but too apt to be full of himself, to love Dominion and Independance; That Bosom-flatterer, Self-love, enlarges the Prospect of all his good Qualities, and lessens the View proportionably of his Weaknesses or Faults: but turns the Glass to look on those of other Men, and augments or diminishes the Representation, as suits best with the Interests of that Preheminence he would establish for himself. Hence he naturally grows captious and quarrelsome. If others (as well they may) resist this Usurpation: if they not only refuse to submit to it, but look upon the very Pretence to it as unreasonable and ridiculous; and return it with Contempt, or Injury, or the like Attempts in their own Favour; the sense of this diminution goes deep into his heart; he trembles, and looks pale at the danger of those Designs his Revenge suggests to him: or, if the execution of that Revenge seems out of his power, he breaks out into loud and passionate clamours, into hasty threats, and bitter revilings; confessing his impotence, by the very means he would appear formidable, and defeating the utmost efforts of his malice, by discovering its aims.

Now what temper can there be, which is less able to justify it self, either to Reason, or to the Principles of the Gospel? The Foundation it is

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built

built upon is as weak, as the Passion is violent; and the one does not disorder and confound our Reason, more than the other shocks and contradicts it.

There is an Equality in Men as such, whereon all the natural Duties are founded, that make us easie or useful to one another; an Infringement of this, is an Usurpation on Mankind; and whoever draws too large a share to himself of a common Right, will be justly look'd upon by others as a general Invader. 'Tis this unjust preference of our selves makes us touchy and captious: we think more due to our selves than others in reason can allow us; and that makes us fret at the Disappointment: if we insist on our Demand, Others have as good a Right to make it upon Us; and if Both continue obstinate, this can end in nothing but continual War and Confusion: before we can possibly treat, we must reduce our selves to this Equality; for when a *Superiour dictates*, 'tis rather an *Imposition* than an *Agreement*.

But (to suppose a Case which rarely happens) should we think *soberly of our selves*, and *justly of our Neighbours*; should our Anger not have those *unequal Grounds of Vanity and Presumption*; were We wholly blameless, and They the faulty Aggressours; yet neither in This Case can Anger ever reconcile it self to Reason. For whatever fine things
some

some Philosophers may have said of it to the contrary, how it is a necessary Weapon to defend us from Injuries, and a useful Spur to many Vertues: 'tis a strange sort of Weapon which governs the Man who weilds it, and a very dangerous Spur which drives him down a Precipice. Whoever pretends to govern it by Reason, must either change its Nature, or lose his Aim; it must be subdued and broken, before it can be quiet. 'Tis the proper Character of Anger, not to listen to Reason; impetuous it is and turbulent in all its Motions, rash and violent in all its Resolutions, bitter and revengeful in all its Designs: let our Anger be abated to ever so low a degree, so long as it is Anger, 'twill be a Desire of Revenge, and a Passion that delights it self in the Prospect of the Ruine of the Offender: a Pleasure, that is as much below the Goodness of a *Vertuous Man*, as 'tis beneath his *Wisdom*, to give his Enemies the mischievous Pleasure, of thinking, they can offend him.

They give us a very wrong notion of Justice, who make Anger its Assistant; and as ill a one of Courage, who derive the force of it from thence. No reasonable Man would desire to have his Cause come before a Judge that is in wrath; it may blind him indeed, and leave him the chance of doing Right, but can never make him discern-

ing and impartial. There's a coolness of Temper absolutely necessary to Justice, that may allow it the leisure of looking into both sides; and Courage too requires a sight of the Danger: 'Tis a mad Fury that transports a Man, when he rushes on, without Sight or Knowledge of the Danger he casts himself into; his Mind is hurried away in the Storm from all thoughts of his Defence, and he falls on his Enemy without Sense or Design; like a weighty Ruine, only to break himself, on him, to pieces. 'Tis a noble Generosity and Constancy of Mind, which affords the most substantial defence against Injuries, and gives the manliest Vigour to our Courage. Whoever is above the resentment of an Injury, has plac'd himself out of the reach of its force; and he that is unmov'd at the sight of his Danger, will never shrink in the Conflict with it. He that takes no notice of an Enemy, gives him the liberty of forgetting he is so. *Opposition* only and a *dread of Revenge*, keep up in him the memory of the Difference, and make it so very difficult for Him to Forgive an Injury, who has been so hardy as to Do one.

In a word, the very first motions of *Anger* in their own Nature directly tend to the subverting our Reason: Give it ever so little head, it soon becomes irresistible; and, when once intire and absolute Master, can end in nothing but *Rage* and

and *Madness*. When aggressor, partial, and unjust; when defendant, blind, and insufficient; if noisy and clamorous, mean and false to its own ends; if sullen and malicious, full of Displeasure, and inwardly tormenting; if bitter and revengeful, adding weight to Injuries already receiv'd, and provoking yet more, to fill up the measure of its *Punishment*. There are some sorts of *Anger* indeed not so mean, or so extravagantly transporting, and less mischievous than others; but there is none which raises not a great Disturbance in the *Mind*, which does not drive out of it all *sweetness* and *humanity*, and rob a Man of the best part of himself: it may have some *flight* and *transient risings* indeed in the Breast of a *wise Man*, but it rests only in the *Bosom of Fools*.

But still these are the Mischiefs of this *violent temper* only between Man and Man: They are much more extensive, if we consider him as a *Member of Society*. In That state, they never fall on a particular person, but at the same time they threaten and offend the whole Community. For this reason, all Laws how much soever they connive at and overlook the Excesses of some other *Passions*, have taken special Care to bridle this, as peculiarly tending to the destruction of *Government* it self: they have reserv'd the avenging of *Injuries* to the *Magistrate* alone, and not abandoned the Security
of.

of Men's *Persons* and *Interests*, and all the *Conveniences of Life*, for the sake of which they enter'd into *Society*, to the Cruelty and Violence of furious Men, by leaving the *Sword of Justice* in their hands: The *Revenge* therefore which *Anger* suggests to a private Man, is an *Outrage* to the *Laws*, and a *breach* of all those *sacred Bonds* which unite Men in the several *forms of Government*; and where those *Laws* are vigorously executed, 'twould be as great a Madness and Folly to attempt it, as to think to fight it out with a *whole Nation*: For the will of the *whole* centers in that of the *Magistrate*, His Judgment is the *Judgment of the Community*, and the *Execution* of it is attended with their *United Force*.

Neither is that *Punishment*, which Governours inflict for the *breach* of their *Laws*, in a strictly-moral sense to be called, a *Revenge*, though figuratively 'tis often even in *Scripture* stil'd so; for proper *Revenge* is a cruel brutish and malicious Motive, to reap our *Satisfaction* from the *Pain* and *Vexation* the *Offender* suffers: But *Laws* carry no *Passion* or *ill Nature* along with 'em; the Good and Quiet of the *Community*, is the whole aim of their *Sanction*, whether as they are a *Rule* to the *Vertuous*, or a *Terrour* to *evil Doers*.

And

And if *Anger* in all its several Degrees and Dresses, whether of *Malice* or *Clamour*, *Evil-speaking* or *Revenge*, be at such mighty odds with *Reason* and *Society*; how much greater then must the *Opposition* be between That and *Christianity*, whose *Doctrine* is the most exalted *Reason*, and whose *State* the most perfect *Society* that *Man* is capable of?

If *Reason* forbids it, as contrary to our *temporal Interest*, and the procuring that *Peace* which is necessary to our *Own Preservation*, as the *Laws* of *Society* do, with relation to That of the *Publick*; *Christianity* adds a much stronger inforcement to the *Prohibition*, from the regard we owe to our *Own*, and our *Neighbour's Eternal Salvation*, and to the *Glory of God* in both; which is the *ultimate End of Us*, and of all our *Faculties*, and *Actions*.

This last and fullest *Revelation* of the *Will of God* to the *Sons of Men*, as it gives them clearer *Views* of the *Divine Perfections*, and thence more distinct and suitable *Conceptions* of that *Honour*, and *Worship* which they justly challenge; so it heightens, and enlarges the *Prospect* of those *Duties* which concern our *Conversation towards one another*; proposes in them nobler *Aims*, employs more convincing *Motives*, and more eminent *Examples*; assures more excellent *Rewards*, and more powerful *Assistances* to attain them, than any other *Dispensation* could discover, or afford.

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'Tis too narrow a *Consideration* for a *Christian*, to keep down that *Vanity* and *Presumption*, which makes Men touchy and captious; by the Right that is in others to *equal Pretensions*. Not only the deep sense of his own *Meanness* and *Misery* makes him acknowledge before Almighty God, That he is nothing but *Darkness* in his *Understanding*, *Weakness* and *Inconstancy*, if not *Perverseness*, in his *Will*; that his *Life* is a *vapour that passeth away*: and to cry out to him with the Prophet *David*, (as the *LXX.* translate it) *My being is nothing before thee*: but he is taught also to prefer others before himself. *Let nothing*, says St. Paul, Phil. 2. 3. *be done thro' strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

That *Notion* of *Equality* leaves room for insisting on its Rights; and our *Hearts* may be too partial in adjusting Our proportion: but to *esteem each other better than our selves*, is the sure way to avoid doing any thing through *strife or vain-glory*.

Christian Charity always gives us a *high Opinion* of our *Neighbour*, as the *Humility* that attends it does a *low one* of *our selves*: and *Provocation* is as inconsistent with *Esteem*, as *Resentment* with a sense of our *ill-deserving*. The *Humble Man* knows that *Weakness* or *Fault*, he is despis'd or reproach'd for, is but one of those many he sees in himself; that God sees yet infinitely more than he does; and that there

there is no comparison to be made between what he is, and what he justly might be condemn'd for ; even when he is injur'd without ground, the Case is still the same with him. He knows indeed, there's a Mistake in the particular Foundation of that slight, which is thrown upon him ; but the Errour is of too much Advantage to him, to move him to *Anger* : If he, who injures him now, saw the whole mass of his real Failings ; what he suffers wrongfully, would be the least part of the Contempt he must expect to lie under. In a word, *Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; Charity envieth not, vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up, doth not behave it self unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity is so far from wronging others, that it teaches Forbearance ; makes a Man patient, and not revengeful of Injuries : abases all foolish Elation of Mind, Ambition and Ostentation, Pride and Insolence, in overvaluing Our Selves, and despising Others ; and permits not a Man to fall into immoderate violent Distempers of Anger, upon whatever Provocation. Charity behaves not it self unseemly, breaks not out into opprobrious Contumelies, and disgraceful ill Language. As Anger, under the Gospel, is interpreted Murther, so there is a Murther of the Tongue, as well as of the*

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Heart,

Heart or Hand ; and both are brought under the breach of the *Sixth Commandment* , as our Saviour interprets the obligation of it.

'Tis certainly *against reason* to be transported *beyond it*, as it is *against* our Interest to provoke new Injuries by revenging old ones : 'twere more for our advantage to overcome an Enemy by a softer management, than to make him more implacably so, by the bitterness of our Opposition. But these are Motives shallow and temporal, that concern only This Life and the quiet of it : The Gospel considers us with relation to Eternity ; looks on us as Members of a Society which is to have no end, and by that means join'd to Christ who is the head of it ; as Heirs of the same Hopes and Promises, and united to one another by so many Relations resulting thence, as leave no room for our reflecting on those petty Circumstances wherein we differ, or being exasperated by those trifling short-liv'd Interests, wherein our Passions wou'd concern us, or which our unenlighten'd reason might provoke us to set a value on : all the *provocation* it allows us, is *to love and to good works*, and all the *Victory* it recommends to us, is *to overcome evil with good*. The desire of revenge is such a Sin as cannot ask to be Pardon'd, nor has our Lord's own Prayer (though the fullest and most comprehensive) any Petition for forgiveness of our *trespasses*, but *as we forgive them that trespass against us*. Indeed

Indeed the whole scope and aim of the Law of Christ, is to take away all Enmities and the Seeds of 'em out of the World ; to reconcile Man to God, to himself, and to all Men : To God, by appeasing His *Anger*, with the blood of his Son ; to Himself, by freeing him from the dominion of his turbulent and unruly Passions ; and to Men, by inspiring him with that perfect *Charity*, which must needs tame and soften the most bitter Spirits. 'Twas easier for the Son of God to dy, then that the *Anger* of his Father shou'd be unaton'd ; and his whole Life was one continu'd Example of Meekness and Patience, and forgiveness of Injuries : *Who when he was revil'd, revil'd not again, when he suffer'd he threatn'd not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* And all this he suffer'd for us, leaving us an *Example that we shou'd follow his steps.* He suffer'd all the contradictions of Sinners ; and receiv'd, without disturbance, all the Affronts, and Reproaches, that the Malice, or Rashness, or Folly of Man cou'd throw upon him : and even at his Death put up to his Father such earnest Prayers for his Persecutors, as in a very small time after brought many thousands of 'em to a State of Salvation ; according to that most Excellent Precept of his own. *Matt. 5. 44. Love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use and persecute you.*

The Motive, which the Gospel employs even here in the Text, is such, as methinks, no Reason or Humanity is able to resist; *Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* What can induce us to Forgiveness, if Forgiveness cannot? Are we higher than God, that we should be more implacably offended than He? Is the distance between us Fellow-Creatures comparable to that between GOD and the mightiest of Men, that the Indignity should make the Affront more unpardonable? Is our Brother more under our Power, than We are under that of the Almighty? Or are his Offences more numerous, or less capable of Reparation? Do we owe *Ten thousand Talents* to our Lord, and can we take our Fellow-Servant by the throat for a *Hundred Pence*? We must unavoidably own, as well as suffer, the Justice of his Sentence, if he deliver us over to the *Tormentors* till we pay the utmost farthing: for there's no denying, but that we ought to have had compassion on our fellow-servant, even as our Lord had pity upon us.

St. Paul indeed had reason to press this Argument, as being most sensibly under the force of its Conviction. Of all those, whom, out of his great Mercy, God had called to the Knowledge of his Truth, no one was found in such provoking Circumstances: He was a profess'd and bitter Enemy
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to the Name of Jesus, many of the Saints did he shut up in prison, and when they were put to death, he gave his voice against them; punish'd them oft in every Synagogue, compelled them to blaspheme; and, being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them even unto strange Cities. He was taken even in the Fact, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord. In the very height of his Rage against God and his Church, when he was going to Damascus, with Letters from the High Priest, empowering him to bring such as he found professing that Way bound to Jerusalem; God, by an astonishing Voice from Heaven, softens his Heart, pardons his Sins, and calls him to preach that Pardon to the Gentiles; himself being an amazing Instance of it, and a pressing Evidence of their Obligation to forgive one another.

Nor could that Exhortation of his in the Process of his Mission have so much force out of any other Mouth. By the Rage he was transported with before his Conversion, we may perceive his natural Temper was none of the meekest; and after it, no Man, according to the Principles of Flesh and Blood, had more Reason to be provoked to Resentment than He had. No Man was more outrageously affronted, or more cruelly and unjustly persecuted; by his own Nation, by false Brethren, even by Them, whose Eternal Salvation he

he was spending himself to advance; in *stripes above measure*, in *prisons frequent*: so that if Advice can have any force from the Disinterestedness of it, surely this hath strength enough for our Conviction; for there is no Man, according to all humane Appearance, could have more Reason to preach the contrary *Doctrine*, had it been true; to give the reins to his *Anger*, in returning those Injuries, or to maintain the *Lawfulness* of doing so. In this Light his *Exhortation* needs no *additional Strength*. Let me beg leave only, by way of Application, to bring it home to Our Selves.

And in the Name of God then, let us consider, to what good end we can imploy these unruly Passions, We, who give our selves up so intitely to their boysterous Conduct, that there's scarce any thing else we can be said to agree in? 'Tis observ'd by One, of some Note among our Enemies, who very well knew the measures that were taking for our destruction, and proposes the great facility of effecting it from the truth of his observation; *That we hate one another, and are in continual division, either about Religion, or about the Government*. Since it is Now our Happyness to have those two very great and concerning Interests united, which so long have driven different ways; we have a double tye upon us, to defeat the Hopes of our Adversaries,
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by laying aside our Animosities about Either, least they prove in the end the ruin of Both. For, as to Religion, there are no greater Enemies in the World to its Life and Force, than the bitter Contentions we have rais'd about it. We have quarrell'd so long and eagerly on the Subject, that the very substance of it is almost lost in the scuffle: and have started such Multitudes of Disputes and Controversies, as have left almost nothing clear or certain, especially to such as wou'd fain not have reason to Believe those Doctrinaes, which they wou'd fain have no reason to Obey.

The fierceness and virulency wherewith these Disputes have been carried on, are no less the *Scandal* than a *Breach* of our common *Christianity*, nay even of *Humanity* it self. No Reproaches have been too scandalous or impertinent to the *Question*, no *Revilings* too severe and contemptuous, no *Calumnies* too false and spiteful, nor any *Language* or *Arts* too foul and unmanly to be employed in these *Religious Conflicts*: as if the very *Pretence* to Religion were a *Dispensation* from all the Tyes of it; and an impudent *Affectation* of Concern for its *Truths*, were a sufficient Excuse for the *Breach* of its *Duties*. Even where the strictest Regard to *Decency* would be expected, where even good *Manners* to the Lookers on should make Men stanch and reserv'd in the *Treatment* of an
Adversary,

Adversary, that has any Pretence to Learning or Vertue: In the *Combats* of the *Pen*, a bitter *Malignity* reigns without controul, fights the Devil's Battels under the Banner of our Saviour; and, not content to poison the *present Age*, with an un-exempl'd Barbarity, raises lasting Monuments of Scandal to those which are *to come*. This sort of Management may make sport enough to the *Enemies* of all Religion, but I know not how *They* can be thought any *Friends* to it, who afford 'em the very unseemly and ill-natur'd Diversion.

There will always be different *Thoughts* of Religion, as long as there are different *Apprehensions* among Men; and whoever duly considers the great Difficulty of attaining that strength and firmness of Attention, that intire Liberty of the Mind, by which its Assent is suspended, till a clear and certain Evidence shall justly claim it; In a word, that Freedom from Passion, Prejudice, and Interest, which is necessary to ground a certain Conclusion in any thing that is disputed; will see more reason to pity, than be angry at the Errors of other Men: and where they are of consequence to any of the *Fundamentals* of the Gospel, in meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging the truth.

Men

Men are so naturally wedded to their own Opinions, that 'tis generally a shrewd Mortification, to shew them they are mistaken; and there are very few can take any pleasure in the Discovery: if we have a Love for Truth, or the Souls of Men, we ought to soften that Aversion which indisposes them to receive it, by all the artful *Gentleness* and *Condescension*, that it's capable of being propos'd with. A Railer cannot convince, nor an angry Man perswade, neither will Men be jeer'd or hector'd out of their Errours and Mistakes. When we indiscreetly or furiously exasperate their Minds, we shut 'em against the Truth, and their Hearts against our selves, and so destroy all Charity, which is the Life of Religion.

Nor are our Civil Dissentions less scandalous and prejudicial to Government, than our Religious Bickerings to Piety and Vertue; or the means of carrying 'em on, less bitter and malicious. Some are not content to accept of Deliverance, but even quarrel and fall out with their Preservation; and even of those who would be thought to receive it with Acknowledgment enough, there are but too many who seem desirous to lessen the Number. Every Party among us would pretend to engross all the *Merit* of *Obedience* to it self, exclusive of all others; and the Disputes on this *Head* are not more common, than they are eager

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and provoking. 'Twere well the Pretence were as *honest* as it would seem, though surely 'tis not much the wiser for being so confining. But 'tis rather to be fear'd, that particular Interest, and a mutual Oppression are the only real Aims at the bottom of such Distinctions; while the very Name of Party is industriously and very revengefully kept up among us, to the apparent Hazard of reducing us back again to all that Disorder and Confusion, from which we have been so wonderfully rescu'd. In the mean time, the Common Enemies of both our Religious and Civil Rights, are intent more than enough to widen our Differences, and watchful to find their Account in our Divisions. When the Enemy is at the Gate, 'tis time, one wou'd think, to be united; but we have never had the sense to do so, till he was enter'd the City.

God grant that we may all know, and do in this our day, the things that belong to our Peace; to the Quiet and Security both of our Religion and Government: That we may be slow to anger, ready to forgive, overcoming evil with good, speaking evil of no man, and, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour and Eternal Life, thro' the Merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascrib'd, as is most due, all Glory, Honour, Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now and for ever.

F I N I S.

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